SILENCE AND MEMORY: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DURING THE PARTITION OF 1947

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ABSTRACT

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For my thesis, I am focusing on the abduction, dissimulation, and recovery of women during the Partition of India in 1947. Women were used as political tools between various religious groups during the tumultuous violence of Partition, and one of the ways this manipulation manifested itself was through the abduction of women from one religious community by men from another community. Women often assimilated into the new community, dissimulating from their previous identity and adopting a new culture. Later, the governments of both India and Pakistan attempted to reclaim the women as a way of creating a national identity. Women were also violated by men from their own communities, a violence that has traditionally been overlooked.

The threads of sexuality and identity make talking about this period and these particular events very difficult, and many women who lived through these experiences have remained quiet, a silence that is important to discuss. This silence also affects the collective and individual memory of Partition. Narratives are created to emphasize or erase violence in the midst of this silence, and this affects our perceptions of Partition. This thesis will present the abduction of women during Partition in the context of a legacy of British colonialism, as well as the ramifications of the event for South Asia today.

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INTRODUCTION

Where does one begin when talking about Partition? With the millions of people displaced, moving from one newly created country to another? With the loss of property and business that occurred with this movement? With the sense of fear in the air, each person terrified with what was to come and the possibility that they might not make it to the other side or live to see the next day, month, year? With families torn apart and separated by the violence and chaos? With the millions of Indians killed during this time, at the hands of their own countrymen? With the hundreds of thousands of women raped and abducted?

The Partition of 1947 occurred when the British, who had colonized parts of India since the 18th century, were finally forced to leave India after the Second World War came to a close. Though the process to gain independence was not completely void of violence, no one could have foreseen how bloody the process of realizing this independence would be. The word 'partition' refers to the lines the British drew to divide India into two countries, India and Pakistan.

Religious divisions in South Asia were flexible and fluid prior to colonization. Boundaries between communities existed, but they were not clearly defined or delineated. Identities were complex: region, class, caste, profession, and gender played a distinct role in people's lives, and religion was just one factor. However, as the British began to rule, they chose to use the marker of religion as a basis for legal divisions. The British imposed the same rules on various communities that had nothing in common except their religion, perhaps located in different geographic regions or from different classes. This attempt to create homogeneity was in the interest of ruling efficiently, and utilized a divide and conquer strategy that emphasized

differences between religious communities while overlooking the differences within religious communities.

The division of India occurred for many reasons stemming from these monolithic ideas of religion. Nationalist leaders such as Gandhi and Congress Party leadership promoted these colonial divisions of religion and appealed to Hindu audiences, hoping to benefit in the short term. Muslims in India felt alienated and became afraid that they would be left without power after independence. From this alienation grew the demand for a separate country. India defined itself as a secular country, but what this would mean for the large minority of Muslims was not clear. Thus Pakistan was meant to be a country that would not give in to religious majoritarianism and provide a safer space for Muslims.

However, the way the British defined religion and divided South Asia along religious lines continues to play into the ideas the modern nation-states have for themselves. India has lost its secular credentials as Hindu nationalists gain more power with each year. The Islam of Pakistan has become much more rigid with each passing year as well.

The violence that occurred during Partition can also be traced to these ideas of homogenous religious communities. Using religious zeal as a cover for their actions, people used the chaos of movement and violence that occurred during Partition to take women, wealth, and land (Jalal 11). The divides were magnified in order to provide a reason for the violence taking place.

I may refer to Partition as an event, but that word is insufficient—it makes it feel as though Partition has a start date and an end date. And though you could point to an official start date and an official end date, such as Direct Action Day and the passage of the Abducted Persons Bill, that would overlook the fear people felt and the turmoil occurring even before these days, as

well as the aftermath of Partition, that affected lives for many years after, and still continues to be felt today.

Partition is an intensely personal topic for many South Asians. No matter whether they still live in South Asia—in one of the three recently created countries—or have become part of the diaspora, everyone has been affected by this event. Though many families do not talk about how Partition has affected them, the aftershock is there if you look closely enough. Perhaps it's a great-aunt who no one ever mentions, because she was abducted during Partition. Perhaps it's a hatred of Indians that stems back to an uncle killed by a Hindu during Partition, or a hatred of Pakistanis that stems back to a family member killed by Muslims during Partition. Perhaps it's not that overt—maybe it's the subtle understanding that you only eat at Indian restaurants, not Pakistani ones, or that you can befriend a Hindu, but not ever think about marrying one.

It is also intensely personal for me. I grew up with a Bangladeshi father and an Indian Bengali mother, making me acutely aware of how little difference there was on each side of the border. Yet growing up, I always identified myself to strangers as Indian, since I was Hindu, because it was easier than explaining the complexity of the borders to those who had no knowledge of the South Asian subcontinent. How could I explain that my parents had grown up with the same culture, that the only differences in their lives were those caused by political boundaries? That the British are the ones who created this association between Hinduism and India, and Pakistan and Islam? I feel ashamed that for so long, I simplified my roots to make them more palatable for others, that I allowed myself to follow the crude dichotomy created by the British.

For this thesis, I chose not to focus on Bengal, though I hold a personal connection to the state, mainly because on the eastern border, the rupture did not end with 1947 nor the years

following. The violence continued on for years, culminating with the genocide West Pakistan (now Pakistan) committed against East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) during the Bangladeshi war for independence. Instead, I have focused mostly on stories from the western border between India and Pakistan, because the violence there was shorter in timespan, though just as intense and damaging.

I originally intended to write a about the issues South Asian women face today. But after taking a history class on South Asian women, I realized that I could not write about those issues without talking about Partition. The violence and trauma that occurred during Partition still affect South Asia today, in ways that may be less visible but are nonetheless extraordinarily important. Partition is a defining moment in South Asian history, because it stands as the beginning of modern Indian history, but also reflects the damage done by British colonialism.

In this thesis, I will be focusing on the experiences of South Asian women during Partition. Though there is much more I wanted to talk about, much more that needed to be said, it would have been impossible for me to cover it all. I will first look at the violence committed against women, from outside their community, within their community, and by the new states. Then I will investigate the silence surrounding this violence, and the ways that it has affected these women's lives.

There are many historians who have already investigated the experiences of women, taking down oral histories and writing narratives. It is not my goal to recreate their work, but rather to investigate how narratives are created, and what the silence between words, between narratives tells us. I want to look at how we remember Partition, and how this collective memory of the event reflects on society today.

I will explore forms of violence using the short story Khol Do, and I will also discuss forms of silence through the movie Garam Hawa, which also contains themes of dispossession and exclusion. I will use the movie Khamosh Pani to explore the dissimulation of abducted women, and the movie Zakhm to talk about communal violence and nationalism, as well as the parallels between South Asia today and South Asia during Partition.

Most importantly, each of these texts engages silence in a different way. Khol Do conveys the silence of a woman who has been violated so many times, she can no longer distinguish between the voices of her well-wishers and her attackers. Garam Hawa leaves the audience with the silence of a woman who loses her greatest loves to Pakistan. Khamosh Pani carries the silence of a woman who must disown her identity in order to survive in the new nation-state. Zakhm bears the silence of a mother, whose corpse her sons fight over, mirroring the mother nation-state and the violence that occurs over identity. Each story emphasizes the silence of women during Partition, with each woman experiencing the violence and chaos from a different point of view. They convey the fragmentation of community, of family, of identity, of person, that occurs during this time. The divides that begin with religion run much deeper below the surface.

For this thesis, I chose to utilize mostly creative sources. Due to the aforementioned silence surrounding Partition and violence against women during this time, it is difficult to find stories told by the women who experienced it all themselves—that is, it is difficult to find primary sources. Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence* is one of the sources that does contain many stories in these women's voices, and for that reason, plays a large role in my thesis. The creative sources, film and literature, seem to fill in the silence with truths of their own about what really happened during Partition, so I have used these as a strong base for my writing. As

Bose and Jalal describe it, the human tragedy of Partition is better conveyed through the creations of sensitive writers and artists, than through any scholarly analysis. All of the films and literature contain many themes related to Partition, but I have chosen to analyze particular pieces based on particular themes that are more prevalent or visible in the work.

Garam Hawa is a film that tells the story of a Muslim family, the Mirzas, who remain in India after Partition, and their struggles to survive as they become more and more excluded from society. It also focuses on the tragic love stories of Amina, the patriarch's daughter, and the ways in which Partition challenges her chances at a happy marriage and life.

Khol Do is a short story written by Sadat Hasan Manto, and it tells the tale of a father, Sirajuddin, separated from his daughter, Sakina. Sakina is violated by men from an outside community, and then violated again by men from her own community. The story highlights the total lack of security during Partition—violence came from all sides, and women were never truly safe.

Khamosh Pani shows us the life of Ayesha, a Muslim woman living with her son, and the ways in which she has worked to hide her previous identity as Veero, a Sikh, in order to continue to live within the community. It takes place in 1970's Pakistan, and we see how Islamization affects Ayesha's village and her son.

Zakhm takes place in modern day India, during a time of communal riots. It explores Ajay's relationship with his mother, and the reasons why his mother has had to conceal her Muslim beliefs. It also explores the growing Hindutva extremism and how this affects Ajay and his mother.

CHAPTER ONE

Violence Against Women

Violence Against Women From Other Communities

When speaking of Partition violence, the form most focused on is that of violence against women from other communities. Because of the legacy of British colonialism, and the divide and conquer strategy they used, playing different groups against one another, including between economic classes, caste groups, and religious sects, much of the violence during Partition was between clashing religious groups. Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims attacked each other, and women were specifically targeted as a means of asserting power over the other groups.

Various forms of violence were inflicted upon women. During times of war, rape is one of the most common forms of sexual violence, and Partition was no different. In addition to rape, tattoos were inscribed on women's bodies, they were paraded naked in sacred spaces such as temples, mosques, and gurudwaras, and their breasts were cut off (Menon 30). All of these gruesome acts were meant not just to cause pain to the women, but also to cause public shame to their communities. The act of cutting off women's breasts "symbolically sever[ed] their role as potential nurturers" and was a physical display "to other men that these women were second hand" (Menon 45). Similar to tattooing, this was a permanent means of marking the women as impure and tainted by their attackers, but it also served the purpose of taking away their femininity and the physical manifestation of their motherhood, or potential to bear children. As Deepika Bahri put it, the detached body parts denote "the dehumanization of women and their reduction to ghastly currency" (224) in this war of Partition, controlled by men. Women were solely seen as pawns in the ongoing conflict between men of different groups. Targeting motherhood and childrearing also had symbolic consequences for their community. It was the

attackers' way of asserting that the community honor had been defiled, and that the community's ability to continue on, inherently tied to women's reproductive ability, had also been affected.

Violence against women during Partition was not just violence against their personhood, but also against their community, family, and nation. And for each family, community, and nation, "a display of the wounded, an admission of violation, (would be) tantamount to an admission of public defeat" (Bahri 220). To acknowledge that trauma had occurred, to allow the women to openly discuss this trauma, and to charge the other side with creating this trauma—all of these acts would mean conceding that the other side, the attackers, had achieved their goal of inflicting pain upon the women and community. In a toxic masculine culture such as that of South Asia during Partition, this was unacceptable. Thus, the only way to deal with these deep violations was to remain silent, and to force silence upon the women who had lived through these experiences.

And even if women wanted to speak about their suffering, what would happen to them? In a society so focused on purity and honor, a woman raped or abducted "and speaking of her shame must accept that she can no longer occupy any available and acceptable social space" (Bahri 220). The problem is not whether others would believe her; everyone knew of the violence occurring, even if no one spoke of it. Rather, after being sexually violated or abducted, she no longer fits into the traditional roles a woman is allowed to play in society: "virgin, wife, or widow" (Bahri 220). Outside of the confines of these defined roles, what is a woman really allowed to do in a patriarchal society? She must be defined by her relationship to the men around her and her purity or motherhood; after those relationships have been severed and she is no longer considered pure or fit to be a mother, she is no longer acceptable as a member of society.

The safest option is to remain silent. Silence provides a degree of preservation, a hope that she may re-integrate into society, only if she never speaks about the unspeakable.

Women who were abducted by men from other religious communities often converted to the religion of their abductor. On the surface, this appears to be another act intended to hurt the community of the abducted woman, but Menon digs deeper to show that in these situations, it was often "private shame (that) masquerade[d] as ethnic chauvinism" (35). Superficially speaking, yes, by converting the abducted woman, the community she entered completed an act of conquest and achieved a victory over her community. In changing her identity, she was leaving the community she came from; this was a loss for her family, but also for the potential progeny and economic value she could have produced for that community. However, Menon suggests that women were often converted so the abductor would feel less guilty about his acts of violence; for those who had committed the crime, it was a way of resolving the situation and "re-writ[ing] their own violent past" (25). It was not always a political act on the perpetrator's part, just an attempt to assuage their conscience.

Violence Against Women From Within Communities

Though much of the danger to women during Partition came from outside communities, they weren't necessarily safe in their own homes. During Partition, as men in the community sought to protect certain aspects of their communal identity, such as purity and honor, they often committed violence against women within their own community.

In *Khamosh Pani*, the viewer learns through flashback scenes that Ayesha, previously known as Veero, was urged by her father and other male members of the Sikh community to commit suicide by jumping down a well, rather than live and face sexual violence at the hands of approaching Muslim men. This was a common practice at the time, preserved as a "heroic

narrative of self-sacrifice and memorialized accordingly" (Singh Baldwin 2), that fit right in with other historic "tales of women going to 'honorable' deaths with stoic resolve" (Singh Baldwin 2), such as sati and jauhar. Yet upon a closer look, these women were not going to their deaths willingly, but being forced to for the sake of their family and community honor.

According to Shahnaz Khan, "a polluted woman...is an undesirable part of the nation" (133). Women become "polluted" through rape committed by a man from a different community, and even the potential of rape is so fearsome that death is a more desirable option than the corruption of the women's purity, which is tied to the communal identity. Communal identity also becomes extremely important during the time of Partition because each nation is trying to create a firm identity through these communities: India with Hindus and non-Muslims (???) and Pakistan with Muslims. As Khan notes, "the rape of women…(also) sends a message to their men that they cannot protect their families" (138). It is not just the physical act of violence against a woman, nor the consequence of impurity she will face, but the effect it has on the men in the community. If the men cannot protect the women of their community from harm, this threatens their masculinity—"thus rape is domination by men but also domination of men" (Khan 138).

Even if the woman survives abduction and sexual violence at the hands of men from other communities, she is still not safe. In "Khol Do", one of Saadat Hasan Manto's most famous short stories, Sirajuddin survives a train ride affected by communal violence, and asks some young men to search for his daughter, Sakina. They find her on the roadside, and she is already traumatized from what the reader can assume is violence committed by men from a different community. The reader later finds out that instead of immediately returning Sakina to her father, the men continue to rape her and violate her body, then leave her at a train station where

Sirajuddin finds her in poor condition and takes her to the doctor. He is so happy to be reunited with his child that when she responds to the doctor's request to "open it" (he is referring to the window) by removing her pants and opening her legs, he does not react.

This story is significant because it emphasizes that women faced danger from all sides. Sakina trusts the men from her community and goes with them willingly—she does not expect them to violate her because of their shared community. Yet they leave her in a condition worse than they found her, close to dead. It is symbolic of the ways that communal identity put women in harm's way during Partition: if she had not identified with the same community as the perpetrators of violence, she might have actually been safer. "Khol Do" is also significant because it demonstrates how women during the time were forced to accept their fate—the resigned way in which she removes her pants is a physical manifestation of this—and since even their so-called protectors could act violently against them, these women had very little agency or security.

Yet some women refused to accept their fate. Ultimately, women who accepted their fate and women who did not still met the same ends: violence, rape, abduction, dissimulation, and often, death. In *Khamosh Pani*, Veero refuses to accept the fate being forced upon her and does not jump down the well. Instead of ending her life, she stays in Pakistan and becomes Ayesha, assimilating into the Muslim community and marrying her abductor. After many years as part of the community, however, when religious extremism starts to spread and her previous identity is revealed, she is abandoned by friends and family, including her own son. She is made an outcast by her adopted community, but cannot go back to her natal community either, for she would be "devalued as a dishonored woman" (Singh Baldwin 140). She is left with no other choice but to face the silent waters of the well, and this time she chooses death.

Even though she resists the suicide forced upon her the first time, refusing to conform to notions of purity and honor, and rebuilds a life for herself, in the end, those same aspects of communal identity come back to taunt her again. Her adopted community rejects her because she was not born into the community and is therefore not pure enough, and her natal community rejects her because she is no longer honorable, having been assaulted by and then married to a man from a different community.

These aspects of communal identity reinforced patriarchal notions of what it meant to be a woman, and led to violence committed both within communities and outside communities. Men raped and abducted women from outside communities to hurt the purity and honor of that community, and to emphasize their masculinity over that of the other community's men. But these acts of violence also occurred within communities, whether it was forced suicide, or continued rape and acts of force, and as in Veero/Ayesha's case, the total abandonment and rejection that directly leads to her death.

However, Urvashi Butalia notes that we must not place women into the category of "mere victims of a 'patriarchal consensus' arrived at by their men" (168). Though we will never know the truth of what they truly wanted, as the records we have tend to be those of the male survivors of the town or village, we must not deny these women agency. Violnce during this time must be looked at through many different lenses. The "lines between choice and coercion" (Butalia 168) may have been blurred, so it is important to consider more deeply why women ended up committing suicide.

State Violence Against Women

Women were violated by men from within their communities and men from outside communities. This formed one layer of trauma; the second layer came from actions taken by the

state. Both the Indian and Pakistani governments tried to claim Hindu and Muslim women, respectively, in order to create a state with a coherent religious identity. This coherent religious identity did not exist: each religious community was fractured along lines of caste, class, and region. For example, Punjabi Muslims lived very different lives than did Bengali Muslims. Regional identities were often stronger than religious identities, and class and profession played an even stronger role in the everyday decisions and opportunities afforded to people. The state wanted to project a monolithic identity, and thus began claiming the women as their first strategy for achieving this.

In executing these efforts to 'recover' women, the state saw itself as a humanitarian actor (Butalia 140). Supposedly, the governments were reuniting the women with their families and loved ones and providing a homeland. Yet doing so required finding the women, pulling them from the homes and lives they had settled into with their abductors, often forcibly moving them to a refugee camp during a transitional period, and then forcibly returning the women to their previous family members or moving the women to an ashram. Perhaps the governments truly believed that they were helping these women and improving their welfare. But it is impossible to deny the political agenda of separating women and sorting them across the border: how else could national purity and pride be developed?

Men in the Indian government, specifically, justified their actions by holding up traditional Hindu stories such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata. According to Shibban Lal Saxena, who delivered an impassioned speech on the importance of 'rescuing' women, "for the sake of one woman who was taken away by Ravana the whole nation took up arms and went to war" (Butalia 141). Saxena presented this story as a call to action for the newly formed Indian nation to claim its Hindu women, appealing to a sense of heroism and supposed classic values.

By equating Ravana with the Muslim men assumed to be abducting Hindu women, Saxena was also ensuring that Pakistan and Muslim men were vilified. Hindu women, in turn, by being equated with Sita, also had their agency removed: they were "taken away" by the demonic Other, and as the good wife, they must be returned no matter their will.

Saxena was not alone in his use of the Ramayana as a rhetorical resource. Butalia notes that pamphlets were distributed about "Sita's abduction by Ravana, showing how she remained pure despite her time away from her husband" (127). These pamphlets aimed to assuage concerns about the purity of recovered women. Many Hindu families were unwilling to accept women after they had been recovered by the government. By using this classic story, a story that most of the intended Hindu audience would know, the government hoped that the women would be taken off its hands and returned to their supposed homes.

The new governments created laws specifically for women who had been abducted, creating official records of their efforts to return these women. A resolution was passed by the Indian Constituent Assembly asserting that "'people should be given every opportunity to return to their homes and the life of their choice', but women 'must be restored to their homes'" (Didur 131). Even as choice and opportunity was being emphasized, in the same breath, women were reminded that they did not have those privileges, that their 'choices' were reduced to what the government and their family wanted for them. Women were not included in the category of 'people' that the Assembly wrote about in their resolution. Their rights were considered secondary to those of males.

This lack of choice was further accentuated by The Abducted Persons (Recovery and Restoration) Bill, passed in India in 1949. In the bill, abducted persons were defined as "a male child under the age of sixteen years or a female of whatever age" (Didur 132). Those who were

considered abducted were subject to a tribunal that would make decisions about where they would go. It is clear from this bill that women were subject to completely different standards than men. Men over the age of sixteen were allowed to make their own decisions, while a woman as young as thirteen or as old as seventy would both be subject to whatever the state wanted. This law clearly reflects the patriarchal norms of Indian society and the lack of choice for women of any age.

The governments were under the impression, or rather tried to create the impression, that they were doing the right thing for these women. Legislation was created that would place the recovered women in a different environment from the one they had been living in. This was usually a camp of some sort, and was supposed to "make [the women] feel free to make [a] choice" (Butalia 143). According to the government, women could not make a free choice while they were still in the surroundings they had been abducted in. They had to be removed from their present living conditions, regardless of whether they were there voluntarily or were happy, and then taken to the camp. Once removed to the camp, however, the police and social workers there pressured the women to 'return' to their original families. The camp was supposed to be a transitional area for the women to make their decision, but if they had already been taken to the camp, chances were slim that they would be allowed to return to their abductor or their post-Partition life.

Many were in disbelief that women would even want to stay with their abductors. They questioned how abducted women could possibly be happy in their new relationships, even after all the violence. Shrimati Durgabai, a famous social worker, asked "Is it not out of helplessness", that there is no alternative to an alliance "with a person who is no more than the murderer of her husband, her father, her brother" (Menon 40). This simplified the situation, making many

assumptions. She assumed that the abductor was also the person who had committed violence against the rest of her family, that the woman had not been forced into this relationship by her family in the first place, and that the abductor treated her poorly, or worse than her family had. Whether social workers like Durgabai actually believed their own rhetoric or not, we cannot say. But this was a way for the government to rationalize the way it "discount(ed) the recovered women's opposition" (Menon 40) to being 'returned'. This rhetoric tried to conceal the women's resistance to being told where to go: even if they claimed to be happy, it was out of helplessness, or brainwashing, or fear. They couldn't really, truthfully speak for themselves, or so this rhetoric seemed to say.

CHAPTER TWO

Silence

Partition is more than just a "moment of rupture" (4), as Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar puts it. It is many years, both before and after 1947, of violence and trauma, of transformation and formation of community and nation. This makes it an extraordinarily difficult subject to talk about, especially for those who lived through those years, as well as their descendants.

Zamindar notes the "drone of silence" (13) that she heard many times during interviews about Partition with familial households. Sometimes it was a pause, before drawing up the language to describe a horrific event. Sometimes it was an inability to answer, an unwillingness to recreate and relive something so terrible, even if just in words. Sometimes it was a refusal to think about Partition again, having carefully stored away those memories.

This silence symbolizes the "unbearable grief" (Zamindar 14), loss, and suffering that those in South Asia went through during Partition. Everyone was affected by the violence, death, and upheaval, and the ways they talk about, or don't talk about, Partition reflect this. To be asked to tell and retell the stories is no easy feat, to recount losing family members and communities and lives lived that irrevocably changed during the years of Partition.

Some topics are simply off limits, even when people are willing to speak about their experiences during Partition. During an interview, Zamindar writes of a man who, when asked about his role as a special police officer, told her "point-blank to talk to him about other things" (26). The violence was, quite literally, unspeakable, and he is both unable and unwilling to share these particular stories with Zamindar. In his case, his role as a special police officer was also tied to terror and guilt at watching and being complicit as his fellow Muslims were pushed out of

Delhi. These stories of Partition bring up feelings not just tied to the actual actions of the storyteller, but also emotions tied to an understanding of everything happening surrounding Partition and how their stories fit in to these events.

Yet the question must be asked: what gaps does this silence leave? How much do we really know about what happened during Partition, when there is so much left unsaid? We cannot ever really capture the most horrifying events of Partition if no one talks about them. What we have are bits and pieces of narratives, and though collectively, they present a picture, with so much silence, we have no way of knowing if that picture accurately reflects everything that happened. But we may never have that accuracy either. History is not a perfect retelling of exact events and emotions without bias; rather, there are many influences on what we remember and the way we remember. And even if we were to somehow get that perfect retelling, we would still never understand or know fully what living through Partition was like. As Jill Didur states, there should be "an attention to not only *whose* or *what* history is represented, but, indeed, *how* it is represented and for *what purpose*" (55). Memory does not exist in a vacuum, and the act of remembering and retelling can be manipulated.

However, it is not just a general silence that surrounds these narratives. There is also silence specifically concerning women's experiences during Partition. For example, during Sikh remembrance rituals, women's forced suicides are remembered as gestures of valor, while abductions and other acts of violence are barely mentioned or completely ignored (Didur 56-57). There is often just partial remembrance, purposefully overlooking the most traumatic events. In trying to remember these events, when women survivors are asked for their stories, there is still much silence and trouble recounting what happened.

While Urvashi Butalia attributes this to the pain and horror of remembering, Gyanendra Pandey has a different theory. Pandey notes that when interviewing members of a family, though "questions were directed at the mother, she 'kept turning the questions over to her elder son and her brother, even though the latter tried to leave the conversation to her and me'" (Didur 57). The son gives a "sophisticated, rounded account" (Didur 57) of events, while in contrast, the mother only speaks briefly and "responds repeatedly with the proposition that she has nothing to tell… and nothing happened in our village" (Didur 57).

This is not abnormal behavior, but rather, something that Pandey sees often. This is because current social conditions in South Asia mean that testimony on violence during Partition puts the woman telling the story at risk of compromising her identity. If she shares her experience, she could "invalidate her present status" (Didur 58) and be seen as informing on the actions of men in her family and community. Telling a Partition story means not just implicating the men from outside communities who committed violence against the woman, but also the men from within the community that committed violence against women in their community as well as outside communities.

Women who were abducted or considered polluted often are able to survive by following a "tacit agreement within the community to not speak about their past" (Didur 58). This silence and complicity meant that they could continue to live and be included in the community, but it also means that there is no record of their trauma. As time goes on and many of these women die, we will never be able to retrieve their narratives or ask them for their stories.

Pandey's theory is reinforced by Deepika Bahri, who finds that "in a society that has no place in its cultural imaginary for the polluted", there is "no room for the woman literally unmade, undone, socially unraveled by virtue of the loss of virtue" (219). In South Asian society,

shaped by constructs of purity for women, these women are relegated to invisibility, forever forced to remain in the shadows because of violence committed by others. According to Bahri, testifying about the violence of Partition could be "extremely dangerous" (219) for these women. It is "doubly unspeakable" not only because "its content is untranslatable into language", but also because the women fear the "social 'death'" (Bahri 219) that may come if they do speak. Social death was possibly feared more than actual death: at least with actual death one could rest; social death meant the constant stress, unhappiness, and loneliness as one was forced to stay separate and refused the option of warm human contact.

So these women carried their memories around, holding them close and remaining silent. Veena Das shares the thoughts of one woman she spoke to, who compared the memories of Partition to "poison that makes the inside of the woman dissolve" (84). It was never going to be an easy process, but the comparison really emphasizes the pain of the women who had to continue living with their memories, never experiencing the catharsis of processing or communicating the trauma they had undergone.

Das makes another important point when she discusses the way women achieved their silence. By using "language that was general and metaphoric" and refusing to specifically describe any major events, or by "describing the surrounding events" (Das 84) and not stating anything about their abduction and rape, these women achieved agency through their language. Choosing how to tell the parts of the story they wanted to tell and choosing the language to describe these parts may well have been an empowering experience for women who had already had so much taken away from them.

It is hard to emphasize how much was taken away from these women. Not only were they silenced emotionally and verbally, but they were also physically silenced. Women who had

children with their abductors or were pregnant with the child of an abductor were forced by the state to abort the child or give the child up (Butalia 128). It didn't matter what the women wanted: whether they had fallen in love with their abductor, were happily married, or wanted to keep the child. The state forced these women to hide the 'evidence' that sexual violence had occurred, so they could 'return' to a family that often didn't want them, or to a land they had never seen or lived in. Covering the evidence, in the form of these children and pregnancies, required a "special budget set aside" (Butalia 128) specifically for abortions and ashrams, to house the women who refused to leave their children behind or "return" the way the government wanted them to, as well as social workers who helped organize the system.

Ironically enough, one of these ashrams was built on the site of a graveyard (Butalia 129). What does this say about the type of care the state took of these women? They were supposed to be starting new lives, but these lives were built, quite literally, on the bodies of the dead. In many ways, this ashram is symbolic of the shadows the women were forced to live in. Just as the dead could not speak about the trauma they had undergone, neither could these women. In many ways, remaining silent meant killing the part of you that remembered, killing the part of you that had experienced trauma.

Dalit women, however, had a completely different experience regarding silence. For them, the silence that had been forced upon them for centuries, for all their lives, came to serve as a sort of immunity. They had been hidden from the rest of society, never to be listened to or seen, and it is this invisibility that protected them during the violent days of Partition. Butalia posits that "the seizure of property… played a fairly significant role in the violence", but the Dalit community did not own property, so there was "nothing to be looted, nothing to lose" (243). Though they had been called untouchables before, as an insult and to emphasize the

perceived uncleanliness, this untouchability worked in their favor as Dalit women and men remained unharmed by the warring mobs.

Literature and Silence

Literature is a powerful tool for working in the space that silence creates. We may never get to hear the stories and lived experiences of women who suffered during Partition, whether they are unable or unwilling to describe what they went through. However, "literary representations of history (can) emphasize the gaps between and within different perceptions of 'reality'" (Didur 136-137). Focusing on these gaps, on the pauses and breaks in stories told, we can disrupt the narratives created by those who wish to remember Partition a particular way. All too often history is written by those who would rather forget, or "paper over the cracks" (Didur 137) and create a smoother, simpler narrative. This silence provides a space for creativity to flow, for the complicated and tangled histories of women to be told through the lens of the author.

We can use literature to fill in the details that are too painful to be spoken. However, it is important to acknowledge that the "'reality' of (the) 'abducted' women's experience is never definitively knowable" (Didur 137). Literature may be rewriting the narrative, but it is also imagining the experience. The prose we read provides an avenue to consider stories more closely, but one must always keep in mind that they are not truth in the basic sense of the word, that we will never actually know the heavier reality. Fiction may provide one part of the truth, or speak to one piece of a woman's story. Most importantly, literature allows us to observe the "power relations that inform [a story's] construction" (Didur 137).

Khol Do

In rewriting the narrative, literature can disrupt perceptions of societal values. In "Khol Do", Sirajuddin's happiness at seeing his daughter alive, and his lack of reaction to her removing her pants when the doctor requests "open it" are both manifestations of Manto creating a new narrative. Partition was a time when "ideas of purity and honor densely populated the literary narratives" (Das 77), while being emphasized by societal and family values and pressures. During this time, "fathers willed their daughters to die for family honor rather than live with bodies that had been violated" (Das 77). Thus, Manto's character of Sirajuddin stands in stark contrast to these fathers. He rejoices when he is reunited with his daughter, regardless of the trauma she has clearly undergone. Sirajuddin is unconditionally celebrating the fact that she lived, placing importance on her life over her honor. Though he does not react when she removes her pants, this lack of action can actually be seen as purposeful: he is choosing to overlook how she has been violated and accepting her as she is. Manto brings into question these societal values of purity and honor, providing an example of a father who receives his violated daughter with open arms.

Manto was known for questioning the status quo, for taking a deeper look at societal values and pointing out the flaws in traditional points of view. His work generated much controversy because of this, often declared obscene because of its explicit truthfulness. After "Khol Do" was published in a Pakistani magazine called *Naqoosh* in 1948, the magazine was banned for six months (Jalal 154). But Manto continued to write and to publish, though his work continued to be banned by those who wished to censor his honesty and insight.

Manto makes another interesting choice in this short story—the woman protagonist, Sakina, is silent throughout. We never hear her voice, or rather, read any dialogue said by her. It

reflects the way silence provided safety for women during Partition. By not speaking, you were likely to reveal less about your identity, e.g. what state you were from, or what religion you followed, and thus, less likely to be attacked by men. Especially while travelling or in unfamiliar territory, silence provided a shield between your identity and those who were committing communal violence based on these identifying characteristics. We are introduced to Sakina after she has already experienced violence at the hands of men from an outside community, and for the rest of the story, she is silent. Sirajuddin asks young men from his community to try and find her, and when they do encounter a woman who matches Sirajuddin's description, she begins running away from them. During Partition, there was no time for friendly conversation, and speaking to men and saying the wrong thing could be very dangerous. So Sakina runs until the young men catch up to her , and it is only after they ask if she is Sakina that she reveals her identity.

The young men are supposed to keep her safe and return her home, but instead, they too violate her, adding a second layer of trauma. They continue to abuse her and only return her to the camp where Sakina's father is staying after he asks about her repeatedly, but she is nearly unconscious when found and must be taken to the doctor. When the doctor asks Sirajuddin, her father, to "open it", referring to the window, she assumes he is asking her to open her clothes, as we can assume she has been commanded by the men who raped her. In this scenario, her silence also reflects resignation—she has been violated so many times that she no longer protests or says anything in response. She has no energy left to speak, and no will left to object.

Manto also creates complex characters that reflect the realities of human nature and the realities of Partition. He describes the young men as "kind"—after taking Sakina in, they "fed her, g(ave) her milk to drink, and put her in their truck" (Manto 40). One of the men also gives

her his jacket because she feels “ill at ease without her dupatta” (Manto 40), the scarf that covers her chest. It appears that they are taking good care of her, nourishing her and making sure she feels safe. At the same time that they are sustaining her health, they are raping her and committing such violent acts that she loses consciousness. This duality is also reflected in the way that the man offers her his jacket in order to protect her modesty and make her feel more comfortable, while also violating her body, privacy, and sexuality. Violence is never as simple as we make it seem. Are these good men committing bad deeds, presented with the opportunities that the chaos of Partition created?

Sirajuddin also occupies a place of silence in some ways. After the traumatic train ride in which his wife is killed and he is separated from Sakina, he suffers from memory loss, trying to remember all the details, but only coming up with questions, and no answers (Manto 40). His silence reflects the trauma that people during Partition underwent, trauma so deep that the wounds must be forgotten in order to continue on. His silence is also a form of protection—the memory loss may not be conscious on his part, but it saves him from having to repeatedly think about all the horrors he has seen and experienced.

He does remember “the dead body of his wife, her stomach ripped open. It was an image that wouldn’t go away” (Manto 39). There are some images and some memories that even silence cannot protect him from. This memory also reflects the arbitrary nature of violence: he and Sakina survive, while his wife does not, though they are riding the same train. But the attackers must have gotten to her first, and in the chaos Sirajuddin and Sakina are able to escape. It is also possible that the attackers chose to kill Sirajuddin’s wife in front of him, as we know much of the violence was about asserting dominance over other men and other communities. Her stomach is also ripped open, a gesture of symbolic violence. Many men who committed these

violent acts were sending a political message: by destroying the womb of the woman, they were also destroying the possibility of future progeny for that community so they would not have a new generation to continue the traditions .

CHAPTER THREE

Dissimulation

Khamosh Pani

Khamosh Pani, directed by Sabiha Sumar, tells the story of Ayesha, a woman living in a Pakistani village with her son Salim during the '70's. The film was shot in a Pakistani village, released during a Swiss film festival in 2003, where it won many awards, and then released to Indian audiences in 2004. The film was shown in India for three months, but Sumar struggled with distributors in Pakistan and ultimately ended up going village to village herself, using a "traveling cinema" concept to show the film, as she had done with some of her previous films.

Ayesha, the main character of Khamosh Pani, makes her livelihood through teaching the Koran to children in the village, while Salim is just entering adulthood and trying to figure out what to do with his life. He loves Zubaida, one of the village girls, very much, but becomes distant from her and Ayesha as he becomes more drawn toward radical Islam through a friend and two visiting religious zealots. Through the movie, we learn that Ayesha is a practicing Muslim, but has a hidden past. She grew up Sikh, but during Partition, after refusing to commit suicide, she is abducted by Muslim men and later marries one of her abductors. She converts to Islam for this reason, and Salim is born from this marriage, but she is never able to visit the village well because it is the site where her father tried to force her to commit suicide. It is this hidden identity that puts Ayesha in danger during a time where Pakistan is undergoing Islamization, and men such as her son Salim are drawn to radical Islam.

One of the most visual, visceral representations of this growing radical Islam occurs when Salim and some of the other radicalized men begin building a higher wall around the girls' school in the village. They are doing this "for our mothers and sisters… giv(ing) them the

protection and cover of four walls", or so they state. But the school already has a wall around it for protection. This higher wall is being built as a symbolic statement: women are not to be seen, or heard, and they must remain segregated from the rest of the world in order to protect their purity in society. The wall is not being built for reasons of safety or security, but rather for the protection of traditional patriarchal values such as control over women's lives. The wall also represents the growing extremism of Islam in Pakistan during that time—the higher wall represents the more extreme interpretation of Islam and patriarchal values.

Patriarchal values are on display again when Sikh pilgrims begin arriving to the village. Due to a new agreement between India and Pakistan, Sikhs from India are allowed to visit holy sites in Pakistan, so the town sees a new influx of people. The Sikh travelers are seen discussing their history in Pakistan, and some of the travelers used to live in Ayesha's village. However, these men deny that any women were left behind when they left for India during Partition. "Not a single one was left", one visitor states, testifying that "my uncle came and told us that these women said 'kill us brother, kill us' and he went on killing and killing". This falls in line with the behavior of many men during Partition, who killed women in their own families and communities in order to ensure that they would not be abducted or raped. It also exemplifies the narratives that men created for women who were not allowed to speak or make their own choices. He claims that the women asked to be killed, but we will never know if that was true. Another pilgrim states "we have not lost our respect. We had to kill our wives, but we did not let them get into the hands of the Muslims". This vehement statement show how much women were undervalued—the preservation of the community's respect and honor was more important than the women's lives. Yet these men are wrong. Though Ayesha's father tried to force her to jump down the village well and commit suicide, she resisted and survived. Her mother and sister both

jumped, but Ayesha is unable to give up her life and begins running, later adopting the Muslim identity in order to continue living in the village.

Ayesha's brother, Jasmant, is a witness to her survival however, and arrives with the other Sikh pilgrims searching for his sister, so many years later. He begins at a tea shop, asking around if anyone knows of a woman left behind during Partition, but is warned by another customer to be more careful when discussing these matters. Partition, and the violence that occurred during that time, is still a sensitive topic, even thirty years later. Many of the survivors of violence, as well as the perpetrators, are still alive, and a heavy silence surrounds the subject in order to protect both identities from being revealed. The trauma is still fresh, and many still carry around burdens of consequences from that time. The customer also knows that silence is protection for any women who were left behind—regardless of the sexual violence, to reveal their previous identity as a Sikh would put them in danger during a time of religious radicalization. Even Muslims are being accused of being traitors to their own religion, so to reveal that someone is a convert could be devastating.

Through a helpful tip, Jasmant finds the house where Ayesha is living and asks her about his missing sister, Veero. This was Ayesha's name growing up, and she tries to hide behind her door in order to keep from displaying her intense range of emotions. She responds by telling him that his sister must have died, like the others, refusing to admit that she is Veero. And for all intent and purposes, that part of her has died in some ways. She is no longer able to perform her Sikh identity and to be "Veero", to practice her religion or participate in Sikh culture. The longer she keeps that previous identity hidden away, the more distant it seems. But even still, hearing the name Veero brings up so many emotions: longing, deep sadness, pain, and anger are some of the feelings we see flit across her face in the span of a few seconds.

When Ayesha is forced to visit the well, she sees Jasmant, her brother again. He pleads with her to come with him and see their father; the patriarch is on his deathbed and wants to see Ayesha one last time. She fervently rejects his request, questioning why she should go, if it is "so he can complete what he didn't finish the first time"—referring to his attempt to force her into suicide. Though it has been many years, her father's attempted murder still pains her and she has no wish to see him. She has tried very hard to forget those hurtful memories, and to see him again would be to confront what happened during Partition.

Jasmant tries to reason with Ayesha, saying "the old man wants to die in peace". But Ayesha continues to refuse, responding that "he wanted to kill me for his own peace. Now what will happen if he sees me, alive, and a Muslim?" In a patriarchal society, the men are always making decisions, for themselves and for the women they are connected to, by blood or by marriage, and the women's opinions are often ignored or overlooked. Ayesha's father already tried to make the decision for her once, when he pressured her to jump down the well, and even years later, he (through her brother) is trying to pressure her into another decision. Her life is supposed to be centered around giving him 'peace'. We see this first through the suicide pressure, in which he wants her to sacrifice her life just for his own supposed mental peace, based in patriarchal notions of respect and community. We see it again with Jasmant's plea in the movie—seeing Ayesha would provide their father with that elusive 'peace' before he dies, but it would also bring up many painful memories for Ayesha that she does not wish to revisit. Both times, she refuses to please him, to give him that 'peace', unwilling to sacrifice her life the first time, and unwilling to undo the life she has built the second time.

Ayesha also understands that the life she has built would hurt her father, because he subscribes to classic notions of patriarchy and communalism. He wanted her dead in order to

prevent her from being abducted by Muslim men, which is exactly what happened. To him, it was better that she sacrifice her life than continue living with a Muslim man, because he only valued women for their duty in upholding the community's purity. Thus he was able to kill his own wife and his other daughter, and attempted to kill Ayesha.

Ayesha is not welcoming toward Jasmant because he no longer has a place in her new life. She is hurt because "for so many years he was living happily after killing me", and she was still alive, building her new life. She had to learn to adapt to her new life, living under her husband's control instead of her father's control, and she had no other choices because her family had left her behind after trying to kill her. The trauma of this abandonment and violence cannot be undone, and their actions cannot be forgotten. She has moved on with her new life, and there is no place in it for those who hurt her in the past.

Building a new life and creating a new identity is no easy task for Ayesha. The movie has many scenes that flash back to Partition and Ayesha's struggles: we see her being chased and taken by a group of Muslim men, and later, the men imprisoning her in a small cell, shoving her and pushing her as she cries out. Yet in another flashback, one of her captors offers her food, telling her to eat something. Ayesha moves closer to him and begins crying on her shoulder. It is a difficult moment that exemplifies the complicated relationships many women had with their abductors. The men who took these women away from their families and held them captive are the same men who took care of these women and provided a new life for them. Though the abductor caused much trauma and pain for the woman, and the woman had no choice in the events, new relationships were often created from these kidnappings that provided the women with some security. We later see a flashback in which Ayesha is converting to Islam and marrying the captor who offered her food and showed her kindness.

Ayesha has no choice in her marriage, just as her father tried to make the choice between life and death for her. But she seems content in her new life, making a living and taking care of her son. Her husband has passed away, but she remembers him fondly enough. We never learn whether she loved him, or whether he loved her, or what their marriage was really like. Did he marry her to absolve his own guilt after the abduction, or did he take pity on her? Did he ever come to truly care for her?

Women in these situations were scorned by their families, who did not want them back after they had been touched and 'tainted' by men from another community, or were killed by the men who abducted them. So was this the best outcome Ayesha could have hoped for—to be able to continue living a relatively normal life, albeit as part of a different community? What did it mean to be a woman living during Partition? Even if Ayesha hadn't been kidnapped, would her family have had her married off to a man of their choosing, with no say in the matter? Even before and after Partition, women were often silenced or chose silence to protect themselves, and forced to obey the decisions of their fathers, brothers, and husbands.

It is not just women that were silenced, but also minority communities. There is a scene towards the end of Khamosh Pani where a mob of Muslim radicals holding wooden sticks marches through the town, chanting "kaffir hai thoh, sahmne ao" (non-Muslim unbelievers if you're here, come out, stand in front). They also command the Sikh pilgrims to stop praying and singing, saying that they don't want to hear the sounds of their religion. The scene is ironic because minorities in South Asia often occupied a place of silence in order to protect themselves. Muslims who stayed in India after Partition and Hindus who stayed in Pakistan after Partition became minorities and had to remain quiet in order to ensure that they didn't attract too much attention from religious zealots and those who believed in communalism. The Muslim mob

commanding the Sikh pilgrims is a literal silencing of a religious minority in Pakistan, of those who refuse to follow the Islamization occurring. It is also ironic because Ayesha has been quiet about her Sikh heritage for so long—this mob symbolizes the danger she faces if she reveals her previous identity, and the continuing silencing of those who are different.

And yet, the rumors spread and the village people start to find out about Jasmant's quest to find his sister, and Ayesha's previous identity as Veero. Society begins to exclude her, with other women refusing to interact with her, and friends shunning her company. Even her best friend, Shabbo, confesses that she doesn't want Ayesha at her daughter's wedding because it could be 'dangerous'—but it is shame, not danger, that drives Shabbo. In the current climate of extremism, Ayesha is ostracized because of her previous heritage, which makes others consider her a false Muslim. She is expected to declare herself a Muslim publicly in order to remedy the rumors circulating about her faith. The radical zealots are the ones who create this idea, and they pressure Salim to have his mother confess her faith publicly. This too, is ironic. Ayesha teaches the Koran—she is as knowledgeable about the holy book as one can be, and by teaching it, she is also promoting the religion's values. Even though she is as faithful as she can possibly be to Islam, she is still expected to prove herself and her devotion to Islam.

Ultimately, Ayesha commits suicide by jumping in the well. She has sacrificed so much in order to build this new life, and now it is all coming down because of the rumors spreading in society and the accusations made by extremists. Her best friend has betrayed her, by excluding her from the most joyous of celebrations, as has her son, by continuing to associate with the radicalized men. Without these important human relationships, and the social support they provide, Ayesha has no will to continue living.

Her suicide nods to the worsening conditions during the Islamization of Pakistan, to the attempts to exclude the histories of people like her, and to the unfairness of a community that abandoned her after she dissimulated from her previous identity just to fit in. Her suicide is also an expression of protest, of anger, of sadness. It is an expression of the betrayal she felt, and a protest against the lack of control she had over the circumstances of her own life. Her suicide is the ultimate silence, but it is a silence she chose. She chooses silence again as protection, protection against a world that has hurt her so much. With this silence, she will no longer be forced to constantly defend herself, to fend against a world that didn't care for her or give her agency.

CHAPTER FOUR

Migration

One of the major aspects of Partition is the mass, forced migration. Migration is not a perfect term, as it conveys a tone of willingness. Many who moved during Partition, Hindus and Sikhs going from Pakistan to India, and Muslims going from India to Pakistan, did so because they felt they had no choice, that their lives would be in danger if they stayed. As communal violence spread, so did news of the violence, and this added to the sense of peril many felt. Yet policies and institutions created by the governments also added to the havoc: though people looked to the state to provide safety, the governments failed to do so.

Zamindar discusses the Muslim migration from India and the influx of non-Muslims from Pakistan, focusing on Delhi as a microcosm. Muslim dispossession occurred partly because they felt now that Pakistan had been created, "they, the Muslims, had lost their right to live 'here'" (Zamindar 26), in India. Muslim citizens of Delhi living in areas affected by violence during Partition began to flee to camps, but Muslims living in areas not affected by violence also fled to these camps. The perceived danger was enough for them to leave their homes, even if many of them planned to return later. This was a very important aspect of movement during Partition: many expected to be able to come back to their homes later, when the violence was over.

Yet at the same time this was occurring, many non-Muslim refugees coming from West Pakistan were coming to Delhi, and needed to find a place to stay, so they began to occupy Muslim houses. The Indian government created property legislation which appointed a custodian to property that had been "evacuated" or "abandoned", and that custodian was allowed to "allot" the Muslim houses to Hindu and Sikh refugees coming in. Even before this legislation was passed, over 10,000 Muslim homes had already been occupied; now they could be officially

taken by the refugees. The law also stated that no non-Muslim refugees could be evicted for occupation without an option for alternative housing. This ensured that even if Muslims wanted to return from the camps after the violence had stopped, they would not be able to (Zamindar 28-29).

There were also mixed zones and Muslim zones created in Delhi; Muslims who moved into the Muslim areas were offered safety by the state, or so they were told. Many Muslims did not have a choice, however. According to an account, "the constable stood at the street corner and they had five minutes to gather their belongings and go" (Zamindar 29). They were forced out of their homes and into the Muslim zones, a violent act in itself, but the language used, deceptively enough, was that they were evacuating, to a place of safety, or abandoning their homes. Muslims were forced to become refugees, even in their own city, through these policies. The acts of violence were not just the murders, looting, and rapes, but also the forcible removal from their homes and the seizures of these houses. The city was no longer willing to protect them and was only focused on the status of the non-Muslim refugees coming in.

Zamindar notes that it is "the breakdown of trust which is culturally constituted in a society" that forces a person to become a refugee. With new laws being passed and institutions such as the Emergency Committee and Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation being created, all to serve the influx of non-Muslim refugees, Muslims living in India could no longer trust the new state. All Muslims were deemed the same, no matter what class, social background, or political leaning they had, and in the Muslim camps and Muslim zones created, they no longer had these various forms of respectability to differentiate themselves to the Indian state.

This erasure of identity continued as a part of state formation. Non-Muslim refugees coming from Pakistan were referred to as "our own people" by Indian officials, and

rehabilitation efforts focused on their needs, while Muslim "refugees", i.e. those who had been pushed out of their homes in Delhi, had questionable, if any, entitlement according to these same officials (Zamindar 38). If Muslim "refugees" did not leave for Pakistan, where would they go? Their houses were already being occupied by the Hindu and Sikh refugees, but the permanence of this arrangement was "contingent upon a Muslim exodus" (Zamindar 39). There lay the motivation for the Indian government to continue policies that would push the Muslims further and further out.

Garam Hawa

Garam Hawa tells the story of a Muslim family living in India, and their refusal to be pushed out of their homeland. The film was released in 1973 by the leftist Indian People's Theatre Association, to which both director M.S. Sathyu and main actor Balraj Sahni belonged to. The film dialogue is spoken in Urdu but was released in India, and is based on ashort story by famous writer Ismat Chughtai. The film was originally held by the Central Board of India for eight months due to fear of communal conflict, but the film was eventually released and received both commercial success and critical praise. It won many international and national awards, and was India's entry to the Best Foreign Film category for the Academy Awards.

The movie is centered around Salim Mirza, a shoe factory owner, his wife, and their children Amina and Sikander. He lives in the family home with his son Bakr, with his wife and son, his brother Halim, who has a wife and a son named Kazim, as well as his mother. In the movie, Amina's love story is intertwined with the issues the family faces in Delhi circa 1948. People are learning to navigate the new laws of each country, and the Mirza family is struggling to survive as their town changes with the time. More and more Muslims start to leave for

Pakistan, as they no longer feel safe or welcome in India, and many Indians are unwilling to do business with them, so they are also unable to support themselves.

Halim is the first to leave from the Mirza family, taking Kazim, Amina's fiancée, with him to Pakistan. Amina and Kazim are deeply in love, so the separation hurts both of them deeply. However, Amina soon has a new suitor—Salim's brother in law has a son named Shamshad, and he is very persistent in his courtship of Amina. She continuously rejects his advances, preferring to wait for Kazim in the hopes that he will return for her, or that she will join him in Pakistan. This mirrors her family's optimism for their home—just as she is hoping to continue her relationship with Kazim, the family hopes to stay in India and continue life as it was before Partition. Just as she rejects the 'new' suitor, Shamshad, so her family rejects the idea of moving to a 'new' country, Pakistan.

The Mirza family faces many obstacles in their efforts to continue residing in India. The house is in Halim's name, so a few months after he leaves for Pakistan, the government custodian of property sends a notice that the family must vacate their home. It is considered "evacuee" property because Halim no longer lives there, even though it has been the Mirza family home for many decades, and the rest of the Mirza family still lives there. This is one of the first major hurdles the family faces, and it sends a loud and clear message: as a Muslim family, you are no longer welcome to live here in India, and your property will be unfairly taken from you. Though the home is later bought by Salim's close Muslim friend, we still see echoes of the Indian state excluding its Muslim residents. This scene also exemplifies the struggles many faced during Partition, as property shifted hands and families broke apart as they chose different paths and different countries. The notice represents the mishaps that occurred under the

new and extremely inept governments, with strict laws that made no sense in the context of the chaos occurring.

Kazim does try to return to India to marry Amina. However, the night before their wedding, he is arrested by the police for coming from Pakistan with no passport or visa. The scene is tragic, but represents the irony of these papers, and the new borders drawn. Kazim lived in India for his whole life, until the few months preceding his return, and should have been considered an Indian citizen. But this history is erased with the requirements of these new papers, and solely based on his short-term residence in Pakistan, he is now considered a Pakistani citizen and must have the proper documentation. Again, we see the Indian state utilizing legal routes to exclude Muslims from the new nation being built around Hinduism.

Salim is also arrested on charges of espionage, after he sends the plans of the house to his brother Halim. Though the charges are cleared, his public reputation takes a hit and many townspeople are unwilling to speak to him after he is arrested. Though he is loyal to his homeland and is fighting to continue living in India, the government is automatically mistrustful of him solely because he is a Muslim. Even as he struggles to maintain his shoe factory, unable to take out a loan because the bank fears he will leave for Pakistan and not repay the money, he is still steadfast in his resolve to remain in India. Even after he is arrested, he is still willing to stay in India and try and make things work. Of all the citizens the government could have chosen to accuse of espionage, Salim is the most innocent and least probable. But even the simple act of sending the plans of a house is enough to arouse the suspicion of a state looking to remove its Muslim population through any way possible.

Amina recovers from the heartbreak of Kazim's forced return to Pakistan, and decides to accept Shamshad's proposal. They fall in love, but his father runs into trouble with the

government and decides to leave for Pakistan, taking Shamshad with him. Amina later finds out that Shamshad is going to marry another girl in Pakistan, and thus, her second chance at love, marriage, and a secure, happy life is gone. She is in complete despair—it has been hard enough for her to find a proper husband, and after two rejections made all the more bitter by the border separation, she can take no more. She tries on her bridal veil one last time, and then commits suicide. This scene symbolizes the hopes and dreams she had for her life as a married woman, and the loss of her faith in any future happiness. Just as she has been abandoned by her lovers, so her family is also abandoned by the Indian state—instead of being protected by the government, their rights are being taken away.

Amina's suicide also symbolizes silence. Left with no options and unable to do anything about her frustrations, her suicide is the ultimate quiet. Her suicide is protection for her—she can no longer be abandoned by another lover or heartbroken again. It is a protest of the conditions she has been forced into, and a protest of the agency that has been taken away from her. With suicide, her life is finally in her own hands again and her silence speaks volumes to the people who manipulated her and the country that failed her.

Her grandmother, the matriarch of the Mirza family, also uses silence as a form of protest. When the Mirzas are moving out of the family home, they are unable to find Dadi, the grandmother. They call her name but she doesn't respond; later, Amina finds her hiding behind some lumber in a room, refusing to leave the house. Her silence and her refusal to leave symbolize her resistance to a changing India that excludes people such as herself. Because her voice has no weight in a court of law against that of the custodian who sent the eviction notice, this is the only stand she can take against the unfair regulations that are forcing her to leave her family home.

It is also interesting to note that there is a pattern of faceless voices in the movie, presenting a physical silence of their own. We hear the voices of the men who reject Salim's requests for loans, and those of the men who reject Sikander after his job interviews, but we never see their faces. Because the voices are never attached to a face, they could be any man. And in some ways, they represent the injustice of every Indian Hindu who didn't take a stand against the exclusion of Muslims and created the harsh circumstances they faced in post-Partition India.

CHAPTER FIVE

Communal Violence

Zakhm

The movie Zakhm, directed by Mahesh Bhatt in 1998, provides a contemporary look at the aftermath of Partition and the echoes of the event in the lives of South Asians today. Bhatt struggled to release the film because the right-wing Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was in power at the time. Bhatt is a well-known director in India, having made many Bollywood films, and ultimately he was able to release Zakhm to a wide audience in India. Bollywood films are popular in many other countries, not just in India, so it is quite possible that Zakhm was seen by many people around the world. Partition is personal for many South Asians, and we see this in Zakhm—the film is closely based on Bhatt's own relationship with his mother, giving him the chance to tell his family's story.

The movie focuses on the growing communal violence in India after the Babri Masjid in Mumbai was demolished, and the ways in which the violence brings truths of communalism and religion to light. The main character, Ajay, has a strong relationship with his mother and cares for her deeply, and it is this relationship that forms the axis of the movie. Ajay is portrayed as an open-minded Hindu, and it is through his eyes that we view the violence of the past and present and follow his fight for religious tolerance and acceptance.

It begins with communal riots in India being shown on TV during a news segment. Ajay and his wife Sonia, are arguing over whether Sonia should have their child in India, as Ajay wants, or in England, as Sonia wants. There are echoes of Partition in this first scene. Many South Asians uprooted their lives and moved to a new place, a completely different country, in the hopes that they would find safety and be able to raise their children without fear of

persecution. During Partition too, the communal violence created turmoil as families decided whether to leave or to stay. Hindus resettled in India and Muslims resettled in Pakistan, each going to the respective country designated for people of their religion. Yet many stayed in their homes, Hindus remaining in Pakistan and Muslims remaining in India, hoping that once the violence settled, they would be able to raise their children in the land their ancestors had raised their children in.

During Ajay and Sonia's argument, Ajay states that "mother and motherland are never changed". This line is impactful because it sums up his loyalty to his homeland. Whatever may be happening, however dangerous the current times are, one cannot relocate and create another home. Leaving is not an option to him; he feels strongly that one must accept their roots as they are. This line will become important later on, as we learn more about his mother.

However, Ajay's attitude also reflects a certain stubbornness. He believes that "my home is here. If it's set on fire, I will extinguish it. I won't take shelter in someone else's home". He is unwilling to accept the reality that his home very well could be set on fire, that his family could be put at risk because of his determination to remain in India. This stands in contrast to the experience of many South Asian families during Partition, who were forced to flee after their safety was threatened. Ajay is speaking metaphorically here, but for those people whose homes were actually set on fire, who were attacked by mobs or threatened, they were left with no choice. This was part of the turmoil of Partition, as people lost property and had to seek refuge in "someone else's home". Abandoned properties in both countries became new homes for those escaping violence.

In the next scene, the viewer is introduced to Gurdayal and Issa bhai, a Sikh man and a Muslim man, respectively. Both are friends of Ajay and live in the same building, which is

where we encounter them. Gurdayal, the Sikh character, is talking about how Issa bhai is considering buying a plane ticket to leave India, and jokes that "it would be an insult to us if he did". Here again, we see echoes of Partition, as the Muslim character no longer feels safe in India, due to the riots, and is contemplating whether he should leave for the country he is supposed to belong to, Pakistan. In this contemporary period however, Gurdayal's joke—that it would be an "insult" if Issa bhai fled—is meant to imply that he and Ajay, a Sikh and Hindu, will protect their Muslim friend. During Partition, some Sikhs and Hindus in India tried to offer protection to the Muslims they knew, as did the Muslims in Pakistan for their Hindu and Sikh friends. However, most understood that the danger was unavoidable, and in the chaotic violence, you could barely protect yourself and your family, let alone your friends of another community. Gurdayal displays the same idealism as Ajay, believing that one's homeland should not change based on circumstance. It is important to note that the circumstances of the contemporary period in which the movie takes place, though hazardous, were also much less dangerous than the circumstances of Partition.

Issa bhai, the Muslim character, has every reason to be concerned. A note has been thrown at his window with the threat that he must "either go to Pakistan or go to the mortuary". Whoever threw the note has subscribed to the notion that Muslims have no place in India, and must be sent to Pakistan (and vice versa—Hindus should not be in Pakistan and must live in India). This notion is one of the main factors in the communal violence of Partition, and is the basic reason for the communal riots occurring during the movie. Issa bhai is especially enraged because "3 generations (of his family) have sacrificed their lives for independence". His family has lived in India for centuries, dying for their country—he is by no means an outsider or in any way disloyal

to his homeland. Yet the anonymous aggressor has the audacity to tell him to leave, solely on the basis of his religion.

Due to Issa bhai's worry, Gurdayal paints over the sign listing the apartment numbers and names in their building. Gurdayal hopes that this action will assuage Issa bhai's worries— if they are unable to see the names of the residents, then "who can tell a Hindu flat from a Muslim flat?" he questions. If a Hindu attacker comes searching for a Muslim during the riots, they will not be able to find Issa bhai using the sign. The act of painting over the sign is especially significant because the name of the building is the "Sanskriti Housing Society". 'Sanskriti' means culture, and as Gurdayal says after covering the sign, "now there is no identity. Nobody is Hindu or Muslim". By literally covering the word 'culture' and one of the most visible displays of culture and identity, names, Gurdayal is taking a symbolic stand against the divisions that have led to the riots. This is an oversimplification, as it is not so easy to ignore the differences that lead to communalism, but it is also a symbol of hope that South Asians can look past their identities to come together.

We see the effects of the riots for the first time in the scene where Ajay is driving to find his mother, who has gone missing. As Ajay is leaving in his car, Gurdayal mentions that there is a curfew happening, and the camera shows that the streets are empty, save for burning cars, and overturned tree branches. Ajay makes it safely to the church where he knows his mother will be, displaying the arbitrary nature of riots. Though the area is full of hazards, he is able to make it to the church through a combination of chance and timing. This was also true, in some ways, for the violence that happened during Partition. Some of the people who moved arrived unscathed at their destination, while others fleeing never made it there alive—a train full of body parts was the only marker of their journey.

Ajay's mother is a Muslim woman who prays at a Christian church and raises her sons as Hindus, completing rituals for all three religions. We see her reading from a Christian prayer book, reciting namaz in the morning, and offering anjali to a statue of a Hindu god. She symbolizes the pluralism that was inherent to Indian society before the British instituted rules for each religion and utilized a divide and conquer strategy to play each community against the other. Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians—all of these communities coexisted, with overlapping traditions and shared experiences, each accepting the other and peacefully living together.

We are introduced to Ajay's mother after she has converted to Hinduism for Ajay's father Raman, however, and thus she conducts her Muslim rituals in secret. She is outwardly Hindu, adopting a new religion for the sake of Ajay's father, but cannot let go of her previous identity as a Muslim. Her original beliefs have such a strong pull for her that she even asks Ajay to complete a Muslim burial for her when she dies. This is similar to the dissimulation that many women experienced during Partition, when they were forced to convert to the religion of their abductor, and supposed to let go of their old religious identity. It may have been much more dangerous for them to allow cracks in the mask of their identity: if she showed any signs of continued belief in their previous religion, it could have been dangerous for the woman, living amongst the family who followed the new religion. However, because of the times she lives in, Ajay's mother is able to continue practicing as a Muslim in the privacy of her own home, since she only lives with Ajay.

On the other hand, Ajay's grandmother, who is Raman's mother, displays the opposite tendencies of Ajay's mother. She is enraged when the half-Muslim baby son of Raman and Ajay's mother touches the altar at Raman's funeral. She considers the baby to be tainted because

of its Muslim blood, and does not want it to contaminate the altar. Ajay's grandmother exemplifies the rigidity of rules that the British emphasized in religious practices, and has adopted extremely puritanical values. She represents the mentality of people who started the riots and communal violence—she refuses to acknowledge the validity of other religions and considers her own religion to be the only true form of devotion.

Ajay's mother and father are technically married—they have had a ceremony in a temple. But because the wedding is not recognized by Raman's family, especially his mother, he is unable to live with his wife. In fact, Raman's mother even forces him to marry another woman, even though he is already married to Ajay's mother. Ajay's mother's experience can be contrasted with the experiences of many abducted women during Partition, who were forcibly married into the family in order to excuse the act of abduction, to help the abductors absolve themselves of guilt.

As a young boy, Ajay is very confused by the situation between his parents. Once he finds out his mother is Muslim, he asks her "why can't Hindus marry Muslims?" She responds "they can, but people like your grandma don't like it". In one short sentence, she succinctly describes the root of communal problems in India. It is not that Hindus and Muslims cannot live together on the same land, or that they cannot marry each other; it is just the opposition of a narrow-minded minority that has led to so much violence.

It is also important to consider the circumstances of Ajay's parents' relationship. Though it is portrayed as a love marriage, the viewer never sees the couple falling in love. Instead, we see scenes after the marriage where Ajay's mother is waiting for Raman to come to her home, and Raman is trying to convince his mother to allow him to integrate Ajay's mother into the family.

Though both of these scenes convey a certain amount of care for the other person, they do not give the impression of a deep love.

In fact, during Partition, many marriages between the abductor and abducted were portrayed as 'love' marriages, rather than what they actually were—marriages of convenience, to absolve the abductor of guilt and ensure that any children were born would be a legitimate part of the family. Before Partition, most marriages were traditionally arranged, but the period of Partition saw a large growth in such 'love' marriages in order to integrate these acts of violence, rape and abduction, in a societally acceptable way. 'Love' provided a reason for two people from different religions, who would not have normally been paired together, to marry, and covered the actual reason, abduction, so it was hidden from the public eye.

It is entirely possible that Ajay's parents are one such case of 'love' marriage, and Raman may have abducted Ajay's mother. We never see the presence of any of her other family members, such as her parents or siblings, which is especially suspicious. As a woman who does not live with her husband, why does she not live with her blood relatives, as many women did? Did they die in the violence of Partition? Did they abandon her or refuse contact after she became Raman's partner? Even if their marriage truly is based on love, it is still curious that we never learn anything more about Ajay's mother and her background apart from her ties to Ajay and Raman.

We do learn that Ajay's mother is very conscious of her past and the way it affects her family. She believes that "my identity is like a wound in the life of both my sons". This is where the title of the movie comes from—zakhm means 'wound', and is meant to symbolize the depth of trauma that results from her conversion and marriage. Her life and her sons' lives are profoundly affected by her secret Muslim identity, her covert marriage to Raman, and her

attempts to live as a Hindu. She is never able to openly practice as a Muslim, always keeping her identity cloaked, and her sons, once they know of her past, must be careful to always guard her secret. The pain from this wound continues to radiate and impact their lives many years later. In much the same way, women who were abducted and forced to convert during Partition also had to live with a wound that kept reopening itself. They too, lived with a past identity hidden that could potentially resurface and a present identity that masked a deeper part of themselves.

The man who attacks Ajay's mother during the riots does apologize, tearful that he is "giving a bad name to his religion" after burning her. But he only does so after finding out that she is also Muslim, just as he is. This is important, because he does not show any signs of remorse before he learns this crucial piece of information. While he still thinks she is Hindu, his only goal is to reduce the crime he will be accused of, so he claims that he is just the one who "poured the petrol" on her, not the one who actually set her on fire. After he learns that he attacked a fellow Muslim, he agonizes over what he has done, praying that he will be forgiven. He represents the arbitrary nature of communalism, with its hastily drawn, extremely subjective dividing lines. Those who follow a communal mentality believe that it is okay to attack and torture members of a different community, but that members of one's own community must be protected no matter who they are or what they've done. They ignore the humanity present in all people, the commonalities that bring us together.

He is not remorseful because he has injured another human, he is remorseful because he has injured a fellow Muslim, which according to the rules of communalism, must not be done. He has no knowledge of her layered, complicated past, and can only see her surface appearance as a Hindu woman. Communalism simplifies people down into identity based solely on this surface, ignoring the many other complications of identity that come with being human. This mentality is

what allowed people during Partition to attack each other, to attack groups of people from 'other' communities. They were not friends or neighbors any more, just Muslims or Hindus or Sikhs. They were no longer the milkman who brought you butter every morning, or the store owner who you bought your vegetables from, just a person following a different religion, reduced to nothing more than that identity.

Anand, Ajay's brother, is another person who subscribes to the communalist mentality. He is introduced to the viewer as a passionate and important member of a Hindu extremist nationalist group that wants to remove all Muslims from India. The irony, as the viewer later learns, is that he himself is half-Muslim, a fact that his mother has hidden from him. He is so fervently against Muslim people for completely illogical, haphazard reasons, and ties this hatred together with pride for his country in a simplified manner. It all falls apart when he realizes that he also has Muslim blood, though he stubbornly tries to cling to the Hindu heritage he believed he had for so long, as it forms the largest part of his identity and ego. Communalism in South Asia attempts to erase the centuries of integration that define its history. Various conquerors and societies that came through the subcontinent intermingled and influenced South Asian culture. No one on this earth has 'pure' blood from one distinct lineage or society, and this is especially true for people of South Asian heritage. To pursue purity is pointless because we all come from a diverse, rich tradition. Anand is the perfect example of this futility, a half-Hindu, half-Muslim man who has no clue of his own identity and wants to kick out his own brethren. How many others who rioted on the basis of religion, or attacked groups during Partition, were the same? How many others were also unaware of their own heritages and identities, sectioning themselves off from the so-called 'others', those with whom they had much more in common than they expected?

The corrupt police officer who helps Anand and his extremist political group is another important character. In one scene, he purposely looks away so Anand and others from his group can attack and try to kill the man who burned Anand and Ajay's mother. He also serves as an accomplice to Subodhbhai, the group leader, trying to use the rule of the law to accomplish the extremist group's goals. He symbolizes the role authority figures played during Partition. Many were passive, either unable or unwilling to do anything to prevent the communal riots. Some police officers participated in the violence, raping women who were supposed to be safe in their custody, or helping to burn homes and buildings. After Partition, many police officers were also in charge of enforcing the law that required women to be "returned", thus enacting another form of violence.

In the ending scene however, unity triumphs over communalism. Gurdayal, the Sikh character, takes out his kirpan, or sacred sword, in order to ward off the rioters gathered at the hospital so Ajay can bury his mother with Muslim rites, as she wished. This is the ideal—men from different religions supporting each other and protecting one another from the communal violence. In the same scene, Issa bhai, the Muslim character, Gurdayal, Ajay, and his wife, all face the crowd of rioters in a symbolic image: people from various religions taking a stand against communalism. The scene represents the hope that inter-religious bonds, such as those of friendship, are what will keep modern India together. It is a hope that the violence of Partition will not be repeated in full, that during the riots, people will stand together with their friends and neighbors, united against ignorance, and not get lost in the haze of communalism.

CONCLUSION

Just as Partition is not an event with a start date and end date, so too its after effects are immeasurable. The ripples of violence continue to radiate in South Asia today, and communalism continues to permeate the culture. South Asia was forever changed by Partition, and we continue to see changes and connections to the past.

India and Pakistan have both continued to work towards creating a monolithic state. Differences of region, caste, class, and profession have no place in the new nation-states. In India, the rising power of Hindutva, or Hindu nationalist groups, such as the BJP, has worked to remove all Muslim influence from history and from the present. The rising tide of Islamization in Pakistan has created a monolithic version of Islam, one which has no place for flexibility of interpretation.

Indian states are now following the lead of the national government in attempting to define themselves by the exclusion of Islam. Maharashtra, a state in western India, has been a controversial center of these attempts. One policy passed by the state in 2015 banned the slaughter of cows, and thus the creation of beef. As Hindus do not eat beef, this was a direct assault on the livelihoods and practices of Muslims living in the state. The Hindutva party Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) threatened to attack movie theaters until prominent Bollywood directors agreed not to work with Pakistani actors. In retaliation, Pakistani theaters have instituted a ban on showings of Indian films.

Each state has come to define itself in relation to the other, in relation to the exclusion of certain religious populations. Each state continues to overlook the differences in their people, by region, class, and caste, instead pushing for communal divisions.

And women continue to be used as tools for political statements of power, around the world and within South Asia. Their morality and purity continues to be tied to communal ideas of respect and honor. Their bodies are still the site of war, defined by the men around them. The recent focus on rape culture in India has emphasized that women must continue to fight to be recognized as their own beings, with their own desires and autonomy.

Silence is not the same as forgetfulness. But silence does affect the way we remember Partition, and the way we talk about Partition. There are many things left unsaid, many subjects left untouched. And in this silence, it becomes easier to forget. It becomes easier to forget how modern South Asia came to be, where the roots of this communalism began, and what the legacy of British colonialism has brought to fruition. It is much easier to overlook the violence of Partition when no one talks about it, to overlook the connections to violence today. And if we do not remember our history, are we doomed to repeat it?

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BIOGRAPHY

Pronoma Debnath was born and raised in Houston, Texas. She will be graduating from the University of Texas at Austin in December 2016 with degrees in Plan II Honors and International Relations, with a minor in Asian Studies and a concentration in Spanish. She plans to work in Austin for a year, after which she hopes to teach abroad and pursue grad school. She enjoys reading, exploring the Austin music scene, dancing, and cooking. She will continue to think deeply about the questions raised in this project, and hopes to continue writing on the subject.